

[Capitalism In Crisis](#)

[Beyond "The End Of History"](#)

[The painfully slow decomposition of the Capitalist Left](#)

[The rehabilitation of Marx and the Socialist Alternative](#)

[Civilisation: A Marxist View](#)

[Marx and his Critics](#)

[Religion and Socialism](#)

[Socialism or Barbarism?](#)

[What They Said About the First World War](#)

["Tomorrow, There's No School In Gaza..."](#)

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Capitalism In Crisis

Capitalism is in crisis. The crisis is not so much economic but political. Politicians are worried about a lack of political engagement and legitimacy from the electorate. They are worried by the effect of capitalism on the environment and by capitalism increasingly being perceived as the preserve of the rich and powerful.

The difficulty economists and politicians now have of selling the "*magic of the market*" and the benefits of capitalism to the working class was recently demonstrated by the tone of the papers read-out at a recent conference held in London under the heading "*Inclusive Capitalism*" - an oxymoron if there ever was one. The conference took place at the Mansion House and Guildhall on the 27th May 2014 where Prince Charles opened with a key-note speech calling for capitalism to be reformed to save the planet. Other speakers included Bill Clinton, Mark Carney, the governor of the Bank of England, and Lady Rothschild who lectured an audience of institutional investors and business leaders on "*how trust in capitalism could be restored by making it work better for the majority*".

The conference was a complete waste of time and effort except for the chance of delegates to net-work over an expensive meal served by workers getting just about the minimum wage and subject to zero hour contracts. Capitalism cannot be anything but exclusive. It is not in the power of politicians, management consultants and economists to make capitalism something it can never become. Capitalism can only be run in the interests of the capitalist class; a minority who live off the unearned income of rent, interest and profit. Capitalism can never "*work for the majority*". No amount of conferences and PR initiatives can hide this savage truth.

And that includes the monarchy where deference, sycophancy and class opens doors ordinarily shut to the majority of society. No more so than the heir to the throne. There is a story told of Prince Charles as a student of history eating an agreeable breakfast prepared for him by a college scout as he gazes out over the picturesque Neville's Court of Trinity College Cambridge with its Wren designed library safe from the barbarians outside. He turns to his personal body guard and asks him if he ever thought of going to an ancient university steeped in privileged exclusivity. The bodyguard said "*no he hadn't*". Charles asked why; and the bodyguard said he didn't have the aptitude to gain an entrance to the university because he only had the same A Level grades as the Prince.

Just as a reactionary feudal relic does not want to lose his inherited privilege and wealth, so the capitalist class has no intention of wanting to lose its monopoly ownership of the means of production and distribution. Capitalism is based on the minority private ownership of raw resources, transport and communication systems, factories, and distribution points protected by the machinery of government including the armed forces of the State. The State is never benevolent and benign but wholly coercive. The State can never become Robin Hood any more than philanthropic

capitalists can remove the reality of class exploitation at the heart of the profit system through charitable works.

And we only have to look at FORBES'S Rich List for 2014 to see an inclusive capitalism at work. A record 1,645 billionaires made the 2014 List of the World's Richest People with an aggregate net worth of \$6.4 trillion, up from \$5.4 Trillion since 2013. Capitalism, therefore, cannot be reformed to make it "*inclusive*" instead, the profit system has to be abolished and replaced with socialism

One session was entitled: "*How labour and management can work together to increase the benefits of capitalism*" while the head of the IMF, Christine Lagarde warned that only '*...by making capitalism more inclusive [can] we make capitalism more effective*'. All she could offer were failed distributive reform measures; tax on private property, taxing the rich and so on. You cannot have a distributive policy meeting human need while you retain the private ownership of the means of production. And making capitalism effective for whom? Not the working class. Capitalism can only be effective for the capitalist class who live a life of privilege and luxury from the exploitation of the working class. Capitalism can never be carried out to meet human needs. Where human needs come into conflict with profit making, needs remain partially fulfilled or unmet altogether. A more effective capitalism is a capitalism that exploits the working class more ruthlessly to make even greater profits.

As Marx all too clearly showed, capitalists are always trying to increase the intensity and extent of exploitation. Workers are told to be more productive; to work harder and to be forever "*restructured*", "*outsourced*", replaced with labour saving machinery and unemployed when no longer profitable. Official worldwide unemployment climbed to more than 200 million for the first time last year, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), a United Nations agency who periodically produce world-wide unemployment statistics.

Of course, a trawl through the papers given at the conference shows a complete lack of understanding of what capitalism means; the laws acting on commodity production and exchange for profit and the economic and political contradictions which drive the profit system from one economic crisis to the next. Capitalism is not about the performance of international institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund nor is it about what goes on in the City. And as for Prince Charles; his "*reform of capitalism*" would see the imposition of a Merrie England utopia of thatched yeoman houses, Camberwick Green windmills and ruddy-faced peasants doffing their caps to their betters. Has anyone ever noticed the wayside sick bags once you have driven through the Duchy of Cornwall's tepid pastiche that is Poundbury?

Capitalism is a social system with a beginning in class struggle as it displaced feudalism through revolution and a potential end in class struggle when a socialist majority establishes socialism. Capitalism is the class ownership of the means of production and distribution in which social wealth is produced by propertyless wage and salary workers to be sold on the market for the sole purpose of making a profit. To understand capitalism you have to begin with production and labour not markets, not financial institutions and not the stock exchange.

So why the panic? Why the belief that there is wide-spread distrust of capitalism? The answer is given in "What We Believe" section of the conference where it is stated:

Inclusive Capitalism is a movement that seeks to respond to the serious dislocations caused by developments in the capitalism of the last 30 years: worldwide increases in income inequality, large-scale corporate and financial scandals and the fraying of public trust in business, historically high and persistent unemployment and short-term approaches to managing and owning companies.

So there is a very good reason why representatives of the capitalist class are worried which is reflected in the numbers joining capitalist political parties falling while those voting at elections have also decreased. World capitalism has created political tensions, contradictions and conflicts that are becoming deeper thereby highlighting the futility of reformism, particularly to solve ingrained social, economic and environmental questions to which the social reformers have no answer. Politicians are increasingly seen as corrupt, self-serving, impotent and irrelevant; incapable of resolving real social issues such as housing, education, and health. With fast-declining membership these political leaders do not know what to do. They can no longer communicate a vision of capitalism workers believe in. They can only offer more of the same; austerity, cuts, and the arrogance that they know better than the rest of us as they drop their snouts deep into the political swill that is Westminster.

Unfortunately the events within capitalism over the last decade has not yet forced the working class to confront social reality, to understand why their needs are not being met and to do something positive about the situation in which they find themselves by becoming socialists.

The post-2008 economic crisis may have seen “*a persistence and proliferation of civil unrest on a scale that has never been seen before in human history*” (Dr Nafeez Ahmed, executive director at the Institute for Policy Research and Development, GUARDIAN 28th February 2014), but anger, blind violence, and following political leaders does not lead to socialism. However capitalism will not leave the working class alone. There is nowhere to hide. Capitalism cannot produce to satisfy human needs as the purpose of production is profit, capital accumulation and the expansion of value. And profit can only come from exploiting the working class. Workers produce all the social wealth but are paid considerably less than what they actually produce.

Of course the imposition of austerity measures throughout Europe and the failure of the European Union project have seen the rise of fascist political parties, the blaming of immigrants for lack of housing and jobs and violence towards minorities.

However the solution to the political crisis of capitalism is not the cul-de-sac of fascism, blame and retribution but the urgent need for socialism. Workers have to confront with sober senses the need for revolutionary change. And what will force workers to become socialists is capitalism itself. Capitalism is a fetter on production and a barrier to a society of abundance. A truly inclusive society is one where there is the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society: socialism.

[Back to top](#)

Beyond "The End Of History"

Why is capitalism undergoing a political crisis?

Recall the events of 1989 climaxing with the fall of the Berlin Wall. We were told at the time that US capitalism was everywhere triumphant and its image was going to be imposed on the rest of the world through free market and free trade globalisation. We were going to live in a capitalist utopia of sustained growth, a rising standard of living and with people indulging in an ever more exquisite and refined commodity consumption. We were to become discriminating Epicureans not socialist revolutionaries.

According to the political ideology preached a group of conservative intellectuals they wanted the imposition on the rest of the world of a global US empire – “*A New World Order*”. They dismissed as either utopian or totalitarian any alternative world view including the socialism put forward by Marx and the Socialist Party of Great Britain. According to the thinking of the “*neo-cons*” there was no viable or practical competing social system in town. In short, there was no alternative to the capitalism which existed in the US and the political system which supported it. The profit system was going to last forever; we had reached the end of history. This influential group were to found in the White House administration of George W Bush and in the free market policy institutes located around Washington. They were known as “*Neo-cons*” whose political ambitions were set-out on their web site “*Project for the New American Century*”.

Then there was 9/11, the growth of radical Islam, individual and state terrorism and the rise of an authoritarian Chinese capitalism as a dominant world power threatening access to raw resources, trade routes and spheres of strategic influence . Two disastrous wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have diminished the global influence of US capitalism and its allies. Who can forget the images of torture and humiliation of Iraqi prisoners; the decimated families on the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan written off as “*collateral damage*”; the torn and fractured limbs, body parts and returning coffins draped in national flags? War, destruction and conflict the daily reality for those living out their lives in the 21st century: not much fun at “*the end of history*”.

The United States was not on the “*right side of history*” as its advocates assumed. China has now become a major player in the Pacific and Indian Oceans and is struggling with the US to dominate trade routes and spheres of strategic importance. The Pacific Rim is a geographical area where it is believed by political commentators that future wars will be fought as the think tank; Global Research outlined a few years back in an article, *FUTURE WAR WITH CHINA: NEW US BOMBER AIMED AT CHINA?* In 2011 the Obama administration budgeted for the US Air Force to spend \$3.7 billion to produce new bombers in the escalation of the arms race between the US and China. The article noted:

Since early 2010, China has debuted a new stealth fighter prototype (the Chengdu J-20), brought ballistic anti-ship missiles into service and at least temporarily matched the US in sheer number of satellite launches. Meanwhile, the United States has deployed long-range spy drones to Guam, test-flown a new carrier-launched drone fighter and begun development of new supersonic anti-ship missiles—all in addition to the new bomber programme.
(<http://www.globalresearch.ca/future-war>)

The US has enjoyed world economic dominance since it displaced Britain in 1872. However, according to an article in the *FINANCIAL TIMES* (30 04 14), China looks to become the largest economy in the world and by 2030 economists believe that it will have an economy twice as large as the US and larger than the EU and US combined accounting for one third global GDP. China, for example, used as much cement from 2011 to 2013 as the US did in the whole of the 20th century (*RIBA JOURNAL* August 2014 p. 41). None of these developments were ever dreamt of in the philosophy of the neo-conservatives led by Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, and Richard Perlman who all thought “*history*” was on their side (see *Neoconservatism: An Obituary for an Idea* by C. B. Thompson).

The “*Neo-cons*” were merely messianic historicists whose “*end of history*” narrative that began and terminated in their heads. They believed that inexorable laws of historical destiny sided with the US; “*God’s own country*”. These political gangsters no more had history on their side than Tony Blair had either “*history on his shoulders*” or will be “*judged by history*” as being innocent of any culpability for the deaths in Iraq of over 100,000 men, women and children. Socialists advise workers that they should avoid following leaders at all costs; particular those with a pathological obsession of their own political importance and moral self- righteousness. These political leaders, charlatans who believe that they are only answerable to “*God or History*”, have a demonstrable track-record of leading their followers to the cemetery and an early grave.

[Back to top](#)

The painfully slow decomposition of the Capitalist Left

During the premature triumphalism of Western capitalism after 1989 and subsequent fall of the Berlin Wall, the unmourned deaths of two forms of capitalism began to decompose; the capitalism associated with Leninism and the USSR and the wide-ranging nationalisation programme of the Labour Party enshrined in its old Clause 4 policy written by the Webb’s way back in 1918 when state capitalism was all in vogue.

Both forms capitalism are now dead in the water. Russian state capitalism and its one-party political dictatorship are not coming back. Leninism is now as lifeless as its mummified author in Moscow; the Trotskyists groups are shrinking in size as workers no longer want to be told what to do by leaders fighting each other in secret centralised committees. The Trotskyists will go the same way as the Maoists; the supporters of Pol Pot, Hoxha and Stalin. The Trotskyist tree is now a pile of mulching splinters. It has no future.

The same political decomposition is taking place to the Labour Party. To become electable and administer capitalism again the Labour Party was forced to cut itself away from its own history. They were forced to have “*prawn cocktail*” dinners with financiers in the City, to bow down and prostrate themselves to Rupert Murdoch and his media interests and to become “*at ease with the filthy rich*”. And its politics is no more than the “*radical and progressive*” liberalism of the late 19th century, with its obsession with “*national efficiency*” and a fit, educated and pliant working class. Power at any cost: opportunism rather than principle.

And what a long and miserable descent from starting life as a pro-capitalism trade union pressure group to a mainstream capitalist political Party indistinguishable from the Tories. When Keir Hardie was chairman of the Labour Party in 1907 he wrote two books; *From SERFDOM TO SOCIALISM* and *MY CONFESSION OF FAITH* in which he set out the Marxist case against capitalism. It is now inconceivable a Chairman of the Labour Party would now proclaim either that the Labour Party stands for “*from each according to ability to each according to need*” or for Labour MP’s to set in train a parliamentary motion calling for the abolition of capitalism as was the case in 1923 when Phillip Snowden censured capitalism for its inability “*to adequately utilise and organise natural resources and productive power, or to provide the necessary standard of life for vast numbers of the population...*” (Quoted in the SYDNEY MORNING HERALD 22nd March 1923)

Of course Keir Hardy rejected the need to build a principled Party of Socialists organised solely to convince other workers of the necessity of establishing Socialism. He did not understand that once politicians put themselves forward to form a government, offer reform rather than revolution and to run capitalism rather than work for its abolition they will instead be run by and eventually destroyed by the profit system. And the Labour Party’s “*solution*” in 1923 was merely to replace private capitalism with nationalisation or state capitalism which, when implemented in the Atlee government after the Second World War was an unmitigated disaster for the working class who voted them into power.

Thirty years later Labour’s “*popular capitalism*” of 1946 was replaced with Thatcher’s “*popular capitalism*” where Council Houses were sold to former tenants, shares sold to employees as former nationalised companies were privatised and we were told “*there is no alternative*” to the market and no such thing as society. And then the Tories’ “*popular capitalism*” became “*unpopular capitalism*” when Sid lost his shares and former Council House during the subsequent economic crisis and trade depression when made unemployed and lost his business. And then came along the snake oil salesman, Tony Blair with his “*Third Way*”, partnerships between the State, Trade Unions and Employers and an “*ethical foreign policy*”. Seventeen years later the Third Way is as dead as the proverbial Monty Python Norwegian blue parrot; “*pushing up the daisies*”.

Things could only get better. Or could they? Blair’s government left office with official child poverty worse than when it first came into power, unemployment was higher in 2010 than it was in 1997 and there had been 5 wars and tens of thousands of deaths. And it is no excuse for Labour activists, many of whom resigned in disgust, to bewail that Labour under Blair was no longer “*Socialist*”. The Labour Party was, is and can never be a Socialist Party. It has never existed for that purpose. As the late Lord Houghton, one-time chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party remarked of a previous Labour administration: “*Never has any previous government done so much in so short a time to make modern capitalism work*” (SPGB, QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, 1976 p. 52). And to work for the capitalist class is what the Labour Party exists for.

The Labour party has long since become just an alternative capitalist political organisation. When in power they attack the interests of the working class, impose pay restraints and use troops to break strikes. In fact, Labour governments have used troops to break strikes on more occasions than the “*evil Tories*” whose anti-trade union legislation Labour conveniently kept on the statute books after they were elected into power in 1997.

The Labour Party also fell in love with economic liberalism and the City whose economists told them: “*no more boom and bust*”. There was to be a perpetual boom where the wealth at the table of the rich would trickle down into the hands of the poor below. And the City could do no wrong even contributing to Labour government policy and advising the Treasury. Oh how they cheered Gordon Brown on the steps of Lehman brothers in 2004 when he said:

I would like to pay tribute to the contribution you and your company made to the prosperity of Britain. During its 150 year history, Lehman Brothers has always been an innovator, financing new ideas and inventions before many others even began to realize their potential (DAILY TELEGRAPH 16.09.08).

And the decomposition of a truly opportunistic and theoretically vacuous political organisation continues. Miliband finds nothing inconsistent in a political organisation which has “*Labour*” in its title for him to tell capitalists that the Labour Party is “*business friendly*” and that his Party believes in the market and competition. After all he is not against “*one nation capitalism*”, “*responsible capitalism*”, “*inclusive capitalism*”, “*fair capitalism*” and an “*extremely nice capitalism*” but only “*predatory capitalism*”. In fact Miliband’s political rival and Shadow Business

Secretary, Chukka Umunna, in an attempt to out-do his leader, wants a “*better capitalism*”, but better for whom he does not say (BBC NEWS 7th January 2012).

And while Miliband’s speech-writers find even more exotic adjectives to place in front of capitalism other Labour Shadow Ministers hold meetings with accountancy and, management consultants, financiers and industrialists to frame economic policy and discuss the content going into the general election manifesto. In a speech to business leaders Ed Miliband praised Britain’s capitalists for their “*entrepreneurship, inventiveness and ability to change people’s lives (sic)*” (BBC NEWS 3rd July 2014).

The decomposition of Leninism and the social reform politics of the Labour Party might be a painfully slow process of decomposition. But the decomposition brings political fresh air into revolutionary socialist politics necessary to resolve the problems created by capitalism; problems that can only be resolved with the establishment of the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

[Back to top](#)

The rehabilitation of Marx and the Socialist Alternative

Defenders of capitalism were driven into a depth of despair during the economic crisis of 2007 - 2008. They had no answers. Economists were silenced and politicians could explain little to a bewildered electorate. After all, the working class had been told persistently that there was to be “*no more boom and bust*”. Capitalism was to benefit everybody with continual and sustained growth. However, since the world crisis and subsequent economic depression there has been a loss of nerve. Capitalism is being seriously questioned. It was never meant to be.

First there was a series of articles under the heading “*Capitalism in Crisis*” in the FINANCIAL TIMES (27th January 2012) by their top economic writers and contributors from the City and the universities. They asserted Marx was wrong; that he studied a capitalism that did not exist anymore and then they offered a raft of reform measures to put capitalism right clearly demonstrating they did not have the faintest idea of understanding the profit system they claimed to defend. Yet they were all forced to accept the existence of capitalism; that capitalism had a history with the implication that capitalism did not necessarily have a future without end. There was an alternative to the market. There was an alternative to commodity production and exchange for profit. There was socialism.

Elsewhere, Marx and his writings were being rehabilitated in the popular media. The EVENING STANDARD carried a banner headline “***Was Marx Right All Along?***”, as two journalists, Francis Wheen (for Marx) and Emma Duncan (against Marx) debated Marx’s critical analysis of capitalism. Even the former French President, Nicolas Sarkozy was seen holding a copy of CAPITAL as he left for a summit to discuss the economic crisis, although, given his present predicament, he can take comfort in the knowledge that prison appears to be a good place to read CAPITAL as the former Apartheid prisoner, Sedik Issacs, recently recounted in “*Surviving Jail with Marx and Shakespeare*” (AHAM ONLINE 6th July 2012).

There must be a serious crisis within the political establishment if politicians are forced to mention capitalism by name, to describe the system in which they live under as “*capitalist*” and to read Marx as though he was going to offer some insight in addressing serious and intractable economic problems. The FINANCIAL TIMES even carried a banner headline “*Can Marx Save capitalism?*” (17th February 2012) and included the watchable documentary “MARX RE-LOADED” by Jason Barker in its “*Capitalism in Crisis*” series.

To name capitalism as a social system, as Marx did, is to demonstrate that it has a history and if it has a history it also has an end in human history, where an alternative social system is both possible and necessary in order to resolve the economic and social problems capitalism generates. And Marx’s insight was that capitalism, based on class exploitation, could never be run in the interest of all society. His conclusion was for the working class through its own efforts to replace capitalism with socialism.

Marx was even embraced by some leading mainstream economists for the same reason. There was Professor Roubini of New York University who urged his fellow economists to read Marx. This must have been terrible news for the economic profession since, as students, they had been told by their professors not to read Marx because he was as dead as the proverbial dodo. Roubini is no Marxist but in an interview with the WALL STREET JOURNAL (8/11/2011), he admitted that Marx was right about capitalism and raised the possibility that capitalism is destroying itself in the way he erroneously believed Marx predicted more than a century and a half ago.

For Marx to have made a positive appearance, albeit for all the wrong reasons, in the house journal of the financial bourgeoisie indicates a serious lack of confidence. Not that Roubini understands Marx. He doesn't, even though claiming to have read CAPITAL when a student. Marx never said that capitalism would destroy itself nor did Marx hold to an underconsumptionist theory of crisis. What Marx did say was that as capitalism gets older so its contradictions as an anti-social system will increasingly become apparent to the working class. Marx argued that capitalism produces: "*accumulation of wealth at one pole*" and "*accumulation of misery, the torment of labour, slavery, ignorance, brutalization and moral degradation at the opposite pole.*" (CAPITAL) However, he went on to say that although "...*the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation and exploitation grows*", so does "*the revolt of the working class, a class constantly increasing in numbers, and trained, united and organized by the very mechanism of the capitalist process of production*"(loc cit)..

However, no socialist movement can grow through a mechanical response to economic and political developments. For Marx, It was the working class who was the central historical agency to replace capitalism with socialism not a series of determined historical events. History by itself does nothing; it is men and women who make history. And history has still to be made by the world's working class by acting consciously and politically together within a principled Socialist Party to replace world capitalism with world Socialism.

[Back to top](#)

Civilisation: A Marxist View

The BBC is considering reviving the programme CIVILISATION - A PERSONAL VIEW originally broadcast by Lord Clark in 1969 as a Riethian exercise in educating the masses in the moral civility of the bourgeois liberal arts. Lord Clark's Patrician account of Civilisation was to be his own rarefied view of art and architecture reflecting the cultural mores of an urbane gentleman.

As a man of wealth and privilege, Oxbridge educated and a respected curator of the Kings painting, Lord Clark was surrounded by his own private art collection displayed in a Wealden castle whose moat kept the new barbarians at bay. Clark's contract with the BBC made it abundantly clear that any Marxist discussion of European art and architecture was proscribed. Art was all about beauty, truth and the intellectual and aesthetic improvement of the mind not vulgar and unpleasant topics like class and class exploitation. He loathed and despised "*Marxists*" (THE CULTURE SHOW, BBC 2 31st May 2014).

Debate has been fierce around who should front the new version of Civilisation; perhaps a professor of art drawn from the continent of Africa to illustrate how much artistic production during the 18th century was dependent either on the profits streaming into Britain from the slave trade and sugar plantations or the compensation from the British government to former slave owners at the abolition of slavery in 1807; country houses like Marble Hill House in Twickenham with its painting, *The Landscape with the Arch of Constantine*, by the Italian, Giovanni Paolo Panini whose images of slaves so repulsed the poet, Percy Shelley when he first saw the painting(SLAVERY AND THE BRITISH COUNTRY HOUSE, ed. M Dresser and A Hann, English Heritage, 2013 p.95).

Others have called for a female academic or historian to explain why the commissioning of prestigious architecture for public spaces and the visual consumption of painting and sculpture in the privacy of a palace and chapel was usually the preserve of privileged men (Caitlin Moran, "*I want my children to see a history of the world that, for once, isn't written by the victors*" TIMES MAGAZINE 24th July 2014).

A better candidate, though, would be a Marxist and for a very good reason. In Marxist literature, “civilisation” means class society as Lord Clark rightly recognised to his concern; the entire period which lies between primitive communism and the classless, wageless socialist society of the future. The term “civilisation” does not carry in Marxist circles the connotation of superiority that it has in bourgeois literature.

In CAPITAL, Marx had made the following ecological comment on so-called “civilisation”:

The development of civilization and industry in general has always shown itself so active in the destruction of forests that everything that has been done for their conservation and production is completely insignificant in comparison

While, in his book THE ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE STATE, Engels wrote:

But this is not admitted. What is good for the ruling class, is alleged to be good for the whole of society with which the ruling class identifies itself. The more civilization advances, the more it is found to cover with the cloak of charity the evils necessarily created by it, to excuse them or to deny their existence, in short to introduce a conventional hypocrisy that culminates in the declaration: The exploitation of the oppressed class is carried on by the exploiting class solely in the interest of the exploited class itself. And if the latter does not recognize this, but even becomes rebellious, it is simply the worst ingratitude to its benefactors, the exploiter

This was just the account of “civilisation” Lord Clark wanted to avoid as had been the case of those before him for the word “civilisation” entered the English language in 1772 when James Boswell (friend of Dr Johnson) used the term in contrast with “barbarism”. This contrast between culture and vulgarity was alive and well a couple of centuries later as Lord Clark recalled the difference between his world-view and those who wished to destroy it. In the opening of the first episode, after loving panoramic shots of the Parthenon, St Paul’s Cathedral and the Arc de Triomphe, Lord Clark opined with deadly gravitas:

Looking at those great works of Western Man, it does seem hard to believe that European civilisation could ever vanish. And yet it has, once – when the Barbarian hordes overran the Roman Empire

This was supposed to be a warning from history. The filming of the episode of CIVILISATION in Paris, an opportunity for Clark to celebrate Parisian culture, took place as the riot police battled it out with students under a hail of broken pavement slabs and the swirling smoke of CS gas. The series ended in apocalyptic images of immanent nuclear destruction and the new barbarians approaching from the East.

Who Built Thebes of the 7 Gates?

Lord Clark’s purple language might be open to the charge of Eurocentrism and gender blindness but one group who were conveniently erased from the original 13 part series were the people who actually built the temples, cathedrals, country houses and the arts and crafts piles set in the English countryside of 19th century Britain.

As the playwright Berthold Brecht sardonically noted:

*Who built Thebes of the 7 gates?
In the books you will read the names of kings.
Did Kings haul up the lumps of rocks?
And Babylon, many times demolished, Who raised it up so many times?
In what houses of gold glittering Lima did its builders live?
Where, the evening that the Great Wall of China was finished, did the masons go?*

Question from a Worker who reads (1935)

<http://www.marxists.org/subject/art/literature/brecht/>

And just where did the social wealth come from to enable the ruling class to commission paintings, sculpture,

theatre, literature, poetry, architecture and music? After all, in his biography Lord Clark referred to his father as one of “*the idle rich*”. In short; for “*civilisation*” to flourish at all, it first required the exploitation of slaves in ancient Greece and Rome, the serfs and artisans during European Feudalism and the working class under capitalism.

Here are a few examples of the dramatis personae left out of Lord Clark’s account of European civilisation:

The Acropolis, Greece: Fifty per cent of the population of ancient Athens were slaves. Two factors, the city’s great wealth and its large population of skilled workers and slaves, enabled the Athenians to build the Parthenon entirely of stone. From the accounts of the Erechtheum with its caryatids symbolising the position of women in Athenian society, it is known that highly skilled slaves as well as metics (resident foreigners) participated in the work on the friezes and columns. The slaves worked side by side with their masters who took the money owing to both the slaves and themselves (GREEK HISTORY Robin Osbourne 2004 p.92).

The Colosseum, Rome: An estimated 100,000 prisoners were bought back to Rome as slaves after the Jewish War where they undertook the manual labour such as working in the quarries at Tivoli where the travertine was quarried for the Colosseum. Slaves would also have been used to lift and transport the heavy stones 20 miles from Tivoli to Rome; their contribution to CIVILISATION’S narrative was a deafening silence.

<http://www.tribunesandtriumphs.org/colosseum/building-the-colosseum.htm>

St Albans Abbey: Left out of account of Cathedrals and Abbeys (like St Albans), were those who built them; unskilled labourers, blacksmiths, scaffolders, carpenters, carriers of water, stone and lime, those who mixed the mortar, stone cutters, masons and architects. Also missing was the class relationship between guild masters and journeymen manifesting itself in what Marx and Engels described in The COMMUNIST MANIFESTO as a “*class struggle*”. Abbeys and Cathedrals were also symbols of political power and class oppression. The peasants did not besiege the Abbey Gate at St Albans in 1381, for the fun of it but in order to destroy the hated court rolls of the manors used against them in court cases, particularly over common rights. In a civilising act of retribution John Bull was defrocked and hung drawn and quartered in the market place in front of the King. No memorial blue plaque marks the spot where John Bull died.

The Great Barn at Coxwell: The Great tithe barn at Coxwell in Oxfordshire was admired by William Morris. He described it as “*unapproachable in its dignity, as beautiful as a cathedral, yet with no ostentation of the builder’s art*”. According to his daughter, he regularly took his guests to see the barn and called it “*the finest piece of architecture in England*”. Yet the barn had once enjoyed real economic significance based on feudal class relations. King John gave the Cistercian monks the royal manor of Farringdon in 1203 for a new abbey. The barn was in fact, a place to hold a surplus plunder taken away from the peasant population by a feudal ruling class for their own unearned benefit. Apart from wool and the requirements for feed and seed, the entire produce was sold and the proceeds were paid in cash to the abbey.

Cragside: Richard Norman Shaw’s baronial House in Northumberland built for the arms manufacture and industrialist William Armstrong (he sold armaments to both the South and North during the American Civil war) raises the important question; where did the money come from to build the house and the estate consisting of 1,729 acres and seven million trees, five artificial lakes and 31 miles (50 km) of carriage drives come from?

You will not find the answer either in the glossy brochure produced by the National Trust (vague references to Newcastle and the Industrial Revolution) or in the monographs of the building and its architect by fawning and obsequious architectural historians. The answer is contained in the pages of Capital by Karl Marx and his theory of surplus value where the working class are paid less in wages and salaries than they produce in social wealth. Armstrong and his class lived off the unearned income of rent, interest and profit –Clark’s “*Idle rich*”. The foundations of Cragside rest on class exploitation just as they did with the cathedrals and palaces of feudalism and the temples and theatres of classical Greece and Rome.

What of contemporary “*civilisation*”. We need to look no further than the luxury property development on Saadiyat Island near Abu Dhabi. The opulent villas being built around sponsored art galleries from the Guggenheim Museum to the Louvre, have been designed by celebrity international architects which include Frank Ghery, Jean Nouvel,

Norman Foster and Zaha Hadid; buildings to whet the aesthetic appetite of any budding Lord Clark. In class society nothing changes. According to Andrew Ross, writing in the INTERNATIONAL NEW YORK TIMES:

...the construction work force is almost entirely made up of Indian, Pakistan, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan and Nepalese migrant labourers. Bound to an employer by the kafala sponsorship system, they arrive heavily indebted from recruitment and transit fees, only to find their gulf dream a mirage...the sponsoring employer takes their passports, houses the workers in substandard labour camps, pays much less than they were promised and enforces a punishing regime under the desert sun (March 31st 2014)

After all, it is only Sunday supplement architecture, so who cares? Not Zaha Hadid, who remarked about deaths of workers on another one of her construction sites in Qatar:

I have nothing to do with the workers. It is not my duty as an architect to look at it (loc cit).

As the art critic, Walter Benjamin noted just before his death:

There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism (THESES ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY, 1940).

A Marxist View of Civilisation

Ideas, beliefs, social relationships, methods of production are not innocent of political consideration and this applies to art as well as to philosophy. We cannot escape class relations and the social system in which all types of production, industrial, literary, artistic, musical and so on take place.

A painter celebrating the power of an aristocrat or businessman is engaged in a political act. In his book PERMANENT RED: ESSAYS IN SEEING (1960), John Berger interprets the Gainsborough painting of Mr and Mrs Andrews in the National Gallery in the following way;

Among the pleasures their portrait gave to Mr and Mrs Andrews was the pleasure of seeing themselves depicted as landowner and his pleasure was enhanced by the ability of oil paint to render their land in all its substantiality (p 108).

And Berger then went on to make some remarks about Leonardo's The Virgin on the rocks in the National Gallery which Clark would have found "vulgar and distasteful":

Now it stands in a room by itself like a chapel behind bullet-proof Perspex. The lights are kept low so as to prevent the drawing from fading. But why is it so important to preserve and display this drawing? It's acquired a kind of new impressiveness, but not because of what it shows, not because of the meaning of its image. It's become mysterious again because of its market value. This market value depends upon it being genuine. And now, it is here, like a relic in a holy shrine. I don't want to suggest that there is nothing left to experience before original works of art except a certain sense of awe, because they have survived, because they are genuine, because they're absurdly valuable. A lot more is possible, but only if art is stripped of the false mystery and the false religiosity which surrounds it. This religiosity, usually linked with cash value, but always invoked in the name of culture and civilization, is in fact a substitute for what paintings lost when the camera made them reproducible.

While, Michael Baxandall, in his book PAINTING AND EXPERIENCE IN 15TH CENTURY ITALY (1984), writes of the contractual relationship between artist and patron;

A fifteenth-century painting is the deposit of a social relationship. On one side there was a painter who made the picture, or at least supervised its making. On the other side there was somebody else who asked him to make it. Provided the funds for him to make it, reckoned on using it in some way or other. Both parties worked within institutions and conventions-commercial, religious, perceptual, in the widest sense social-that were different from ours and influenced the forms of what they together made (p.1).

If civilisation is intimately related to class society then we should not be celebrating the building of the rich and powerful but replacing capitalism consciously and politically to create a world in which free men and women can create buildings of social use rather than symbols of class privilege. Instead of the fetish of commodity production and exchange society should produce beautiful things to use, wear and look at rather than for the market and profit. In this William Morris, a critic of “*civilisation*” had something useful to say in “SOCIETY OF THE FUTURE” (1888):

I feel sure that no special claim need be made for the art and literature of the future: healthy bodily conditions, a sound and all round development of the senses, joined to the due social ethics which the destruction of all slavery will give us, will, I am convinced, as a matter of course give us our due art and literature, wherever that due may turn out to be (May, Morris, ed., WILLIAM MORRIS: ARTIST, WRITER, SOCIALIST, 2 vols. Oxford 1936, Vol. II, p. 465)

So what is the usefulness of art in the struggle from “*Civilisation*” to a classless society; from capitalism to socialism? We could do no better than to quote from Brecht again:

Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it

There will be no criticism of class society and its artistic production, exchange and consumption in any new revival of CIVILISATION. The BBC will not ask a Marxist to take a hammer to civilisation and shape a vision of a socialist alternative to capitalism and class society. The reality of class and its relation to art and architecture will not be questioned. The “*barbarians*” will not be let loose at the BBC.

[Back to top](#)

Marx and his Critics

Marx has fared badly at the hands of academic economists, more so from those who claim that they are Marxists; economists like the late editor of THE MONTHLY REVIEW, Paul Sweezy and the Labour Party supporter, Lord Desai, formerly professor of economics at the London School of Economics.

Marx’s ideas were never meant to be the exclusive preserve of the seminar room or the conference hall. CAPITAL should never have become a play-thing of academics where the real usefulness of his ideas, particularly the labour theory of value, lay outside the university within the day-to-day political class struggle. Marx was foremost a socialist whose contribution to socialist theory was to assist the working class to consciously and politically replace capitalism with socialism. Marx’s ideas present a theoretically consistent and coherent account of capitalism and its revolutionary socialist conclusion. Marx did not want to explain the world but to assist the working class in changing it.

A recent contribution to this debate is Andrew Kliman’s RECLAIMING MARX’S CAPITAL: A REFUTATION OF THE MYTH OF INCONSISTENCY (Lexington Books, 2007). The book seeks to reclaim CAPITAL from the myth of internal inconsistency levelled at Marx by academics, a myth that serves to justify the censorship of his critique of political economy. Professor Kliman methodically sweeps away the numerous misinterpretations and misreadings of CAPITAL thereby confirming in Marx’s own terms his theories of value, profit and economic crisis.

Kliman shows that Marx’s critique of political economy is the best account of explaining capital accumulation and the expansion of value moving through time from one economic crisis to the next. He uses a “*temporal single-system*” of interpreting Marx’s critique of capitalism which avoids the errors made by his numerous critics. Furthermore Kliman demonstrates, through a close textual reading of CAPITAL and the so-called “*transformation problem*”, that Marx neither held that the inputs and outputs going into production are to be valued simultaneously nor create two separate systems of values and prices in the solution to it (p.2).

Professor Kliman usefully recalls a remark made by the philosopher of science, Paul Feyerabend:

[E]xperts]” frequently do not know what they are talking about and “scholarly opinion”, more often than not, is but uninformed gossip...General acceptance does not decide a case – arguments do (AGAINST METHOD, revised ed. Verso 1988)

So what of Marx’s critics?

For over a hundred years, Marx’s theory of capitalism has been charged with being theoretically weak and unable to give a coherent account of commodity production and exchange for profit. His labour theory of value is criticised for being internally inconsistent and, in particular, his theory of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall is written-off as having no application to the real world. Marx’s critics claim that it does not matter what social and economic problems face the working class his labour theory of value is useless in interpreting these problems in a consistent and coherent way.

The charge of inconsistency against Marx began with the publication of Eugene Böhm-Bawerk’s *KARL MARX AND THE CLOSE OF HIS SYSTEM* (1896), a book still given a high profile on free market web sites, like the von Mises Institute where copies of the book are still sold. Free Market economists believe that Böhm-Bawerk gave a knock-down refutation to Marx’s critique of political economy set out in his three volumes of *CAPITAL*. Böhm-Bawerk’s book was first published in English in 1898 and is periodically and uncritically cited by economists against Marx and his labour theory of value.

Böhm-Bawerk held that Marx’s committed an act of contradiction when he transformed values into prices of production. In the first volume of *CAPITAL*, Marx assumed commodities sold at their values while in the third volume (edited and published by Engels after his death) he showed that commodities sold at their price of production. The account of Marx’s method and presentation given by Böhm-Bawerk was superficial. The evidence he amassed against Marx was merely cherry-picked snippets and quotations often taken out of context but never a movement beginning with the process of capitalist production, then the process of circulation culminating in the movement of capital as a whole.

In 1907 another, more mathematically rigorous, criticism of Marx was published. The Russian economist, Ladislaus von Bortkiewicz, influenced by the neo-classical economist Leon Walras, wrote a paper, *ON THE CORRECTION OF MARX’S FUNDAMENTAL THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTION IN THE THIRD VOLUME OF CAPITAL*. This paper was republished and seemingly endorsed without criticism by Paul Sweezy in 1949 as an appendix to his book republishing Böhm-Bawerk’s original criticism of Marx and a rebuttal by the leading social democrat economist of his day, Rudolf Hilferding (Sweezy, Paul M., ed. *Karl Marx and the Close of His System & Böhm-Bawerk’s Criticism of Marx*).

According to Bortkiewicz, Marx made two fatal errors:

First: his labour theory of value does not connect to any theory of prices, production prices or otherwise; that is, the sum of values do not equal to the sum of production prices.

Second: his theory of surplus value does not connect to profit and a theory of the rate of profit; that is, the sum of surplus value does not equal to the sum of profit.

Bortkiewicz “*demonstrated*” Marx’s theoretical inconsistency through the use of simultaneous equations within a static neo-classical framework. The equations used in the alleged proof of Marx’s inconsistency meant that it could only be followed by those with some degree of mathematical training.

Marx’s “*economic obituary*” was finally written in 1971 by the late professor Paul Samuelson, a Nobel laureate who had been given a year’s leave from university duties to write a critique of Marxian economics. Supported by a generous National Foundation Grant, he set out to produce reasons why a revised interest in Marx by students was mistaken. Eventually he published his findings in one of the prestigious economic journals in the US under the heading “*UNDERSTANDING THE MARXIAN NOTION OF EXPLOITATION: A SUMMARY OF THE SO-*

CALLED TRANSFORMATION PROBLEM BETWEEN MARXIAN VALUES AND COMPETITIVE PRICES" (*Journal of Economic Literature* 9 2 399–431.1971). In his paper, Samuelson championed Bortkiewicz's original neo-classical "*critique*" and "*correction*" against Marx telling students to forget Marx's method and instead adopt "*the tools of bourgeois economics*" (Kliman p. 48).

If Bortkiewicz had allegedly killed off Marx's critique of political economy and Samuelson had rung the death knell then the earth used to fill-in the grave of Marx's Labour Theory of Value was the work of the Japanese economist Nobuo Okishio's whose "*Fundamental Marxian theorem*" claimed, in a series of sophisticated mathematical proofs, that the relationship between Marx's theory of the organic composition of capital (the ratio of constant capital to variable capital) and the falling rate of profit was both incoherent and unsound. Marx's account of the origin of social wealth, the explanation of poverty and the economic laws causing periodic economic crises, according to his critics, were no longer a viable critique of capitalism (N. Okishio, *A Mathematical Note on Marxian Theorems, Three Topics on Marxian Fundamental Theorem and Value and Production Price* in ESSAYS ON POLITICAL ECONOMY: COLLECTED PAPERS 1993).

As a consequence, leader writers in the FINANCIAL TIMES, like the free-market economist, Martin Sandbu, just routinely dismiss the labour theory of value out of hand as "*erroneous*" without the need for any explanation as though Marx was well and truly dead and buried when it came to any theoretical understanding of capitalism (*So conflicts at the core of Marxist criticism can be amenable to simple trade-of*, 3rd April 2014).

This misplaced optimism that Marx's labour theory of value is dead and buried has well and truly refuted with the publication of Andrew Kliman's book RECLAIMING MARX: A REFUTATION OF THE MYTH OF INCONSISTENCY.

The usefulness of Kliman's book, is that he shows that the values and prices of Marx's solution to the "*transformation problem*" are determined interdependently and so there is no inconsistency (chapter 6), that Okishio's theorem is invalid because it values inputs and outputs simultaneously (chapter 7) and, for the same reason von Bortkiewicz's criticism of Marx is flawed because he valued input and outputs simultaneously which is alien to Marx's own method adopted in CAPITAL. Eugene Böhm-Bawerk is also criticised for misreading Marx's careful step- by- step account of the transformation of value into prices of production while mis-quoting Marx out of context to suit his own political end. Böhm-Bawerk also misunderstood both Marx's method and presentation of his critique not realising that Marx was well aware in volume I of CAPITAL that commodities did not sell at their values something Rudolph Hilferding pointed out in his response to Böhm-Bawerk some six years later in 1904 (see chapter 8 pp 144 to 146).

More importantly, for reclaiming Marx from his critics, Kliman states that Marx's three aggregate value-price equalities hold:

- * Total profits equals total surplus value
- * Total price equals total value
- * The aggregate "*price*" rate of profit equals the aggregate "*value*" rate of profit (p. 144).

From the above the exploitation of the working class is the exclusive source of profit

Despite books by the likes of Andrew Kliman, Marx will still be fair game. He frightens to death the capitalist class, its politicians and academics. They will not leave him alone. In this socialists can take some comfort. Yet Kliman's book is also a warning from history. The books and papers published in the 20th century by Marx's worst but usually more influential critics have not been stamped with the warning "*Bourgeois economics*" but with the totally inappropriate and bogus brand: "*Marxism*".

[Back to top](#)

Religion and Socialism

Religion is in the news again; whether it is Christian militias massacring Islamists in Africa, Sikhs fighting each other at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Muslim sects killing one another in Iraq and Syria, the imposition of conservative Islamic practices in some British schools in the UK where one private school in Luton was found to have library books promoting stoning, lashings and executions, or the crass and anti-socialist opportunism of some Trotskyist groups who are using “*radical Islam*” as a Feudal battering ram against the doors of “*US Imperialism*”.

The socialist opposition to all religion has not in any way changed since the formation of the Socialist Party of Great Britain in 1904. We have rejected the argument that religion is a “*private*” affair. Religion is wholly social in its impact and in its negative influence on people and is totally antipathetic towards the case for socialism.

The case for socialism is built upon a rational understanding of history supported by facts. Men and women make history through class struggle where the forces of production come into conflict with the social relations of production. The class struggle, existing today in all capitalist countries, no matter what religion holds sway, is the motor force of revolutionary change from one social system of society into another.

Scientific Socialism

Socialism is scientific in that history can only be understood and explained in terms of the succession of different social systems which have come and gone, the reasons why they were replaced and the political role of the classes who replaced them. History is not determined but is moved by the actions of men and women. The class struggle is in effect a political struggle in which ideas and beliefs play an important role; whether conservative or socialist, whether in suppressing or highlighting social reality; whether in resisting revolutionary change or promoting it.

And religion is deliberately used to suppress and mask social reality; it is used as a mechanism of social control and the splitting of the working class into antagonistic groups. Political ideas can either shackle the working class to the particular or general interest of the ruling class or it can free their thinking towards the conscious and political establishment of a world of free men and women working harmoniously and socially within a classless society in which arcane religious beliefs and practices play no part.

The historical development of social production supports Marx’s theory of history; a theory of history which contains a savage truth about the world in which we live; one denied by all religions and religious leaders. And it is this; capitalism is the last class system left in social evolution and the workers the last class to free themselves from class exploitation. Capitalism has a political end in human history including the ideas and beliefs associated with it.

Capitalism came out of a class struggle within Feudalism and will end with the establishment of socialism by a socialist majority taking conscious political action within a principled socialist Party through the revolutionary use of parliament and the capture of the machinery of government including the armed forces. The profit system deliberately underproduces to the market not in meeting human need. Socialism is necessary because a world society of free men and women will release the forces of production including co-operative social labour from the impediment imposed by commodity production and exchange for profit.

The social relationships entered into by men and women to produce the wherewithal of life shows that in order for people to directly receive what they need to live, to flourish and to develop as human beings, then social production must be harmonised with social ownership and class antagonism abolished. Socialism is sustained by knowledge and the instability bred of conflicting class interests under capitalism.

The Irrationality of Religion

Both strands of fundamentalist Christianity and Islam, for example, deny the science of evolution. In the “*Bible belt*” of the US Fundamentalists celebrate the belief in Noah’s Ark and the literal interpretation of the Bible while Islamic fundamentalists, like ISIS in Syria and Iraq, believe their religion is absolutely true, that it owes nothing to any human culture and that all true believers must return to a theocratic utopia over the destruction of the infidel.

For Islamic fundamentalists apostasy requires feudal retribution; stoning to death, the lash and the gallows while some Christian fundamentalists bomb abortion clinics, kill doctors or wait, armed to the teeth in a log cabin high-up in the Wyoming or Montano Mountains for the apocalypse and the subsequent rapture for those with a one-way ticket to heaven. A Tea Party Republican candidate recently proclaimed that stoning gays was a law that came direct from God (INDEPENDENT 13th June 2014). All forms of religious fundamentalism preach violence and hate while all forms of religion practice social control and deference to leadership.

No religion puts forward the urgent need for the world's working class to establish the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society. "*Christian Socialism*" is an oxymoron. A Christian cannot be a socialist and a socialist cannot be a Christian. The "*Christian Socialism*" associated with the Labour Party is merely an impotent moral outrage against the effects of capitalism offering superficial reforms instead of revolution; a regulated capitalism rather than its abolition.

The sheer diversity of religion, both historically and currently throughout the world, really goes full cycle and cancels itself out. They cannot all be right but they can certainly all be wrong. The myths of creation, of almighty spirits, the immortality of the soul and the efficacy of prayer have trapped believers in the grip of predatory ruling classes whose interest it is to perpetuate their submission and servility.

From Bible-black darkness to Socialist Enlightenment

From the bible-black darkness of religious fundamentalism there are numerous shades of religious ignorance rippling out to the edge of reason. There are even Christians who do not believe in God and "*liberal Islamists*" whose theological beliefs drastically shorten their life-span on Earth. And there are scientists who waste their time trying to square the circle between science and religion; the agnostics of which Engels remarked:

Thus, as far as he is a scientific man, as far as he knows anything, he is a materialist; outside his science, in spheres about which he knows nothing, he translates his ignorance into Greek and calls it agnosticism (SOCIALISM, UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC)

What of atheism? Atheism is not sufficient for socialists. Secular capitalist states are just as exploitive as religious ones; instruments of class power protecting the minority private ownership of the means of production and distribution to the exclusion of the rest of society. Someone can be both an ardent atheist whilst simultaneously being a wild and rabid supporter of capitalism and the free market. In the US "*market libertarians*" are often atheists openly hostile to both socialism and religion.

The appeal of socialism is of such a fundamentally different order that, when it is asked why, after a hundred years of the SPGB and socialist propaganda, so little progress has been made, a major part of the answer is that the lack of progress has been on the part of those who live their lives on their knees.

Before socialism can be established a majority of the working class must reject the pernicious ideology of capitalism which includes religion and nationalism. To look at the persistence of religious myths and primitive superstitions gives us a sobering realisation of the distance we have yet to travel before the world's working class prioritise their emancipation.

Poverty and religion have always been bedfellows. Capitalism guarantees the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and deprivation for the class that sells its labour-power for wages.

It's as futile to yearn for a form of capitalism without religion as it is to imagine capitalism without war. They are an integral part of the same degenerate society. When the world's workers abolish capitalism, religion and war - together with the other ill effects of that system - will be consigned to the past.

POLITICAL SATIRE IS NOT DEAD

BRITNEY Spears has admitted her latest single *Work Bitch* is inspired by the writings of Karl Marx.

The star has based her latest hit on a lifetime's study of the father of communism, and a strong desire to champion the cause of the proletariat.

She said:

"I've always sung about the relationship between people and the economic systems which govern their lives, for example my exploration of the seductive power of capital in Gimme More".

Work Bitch is a satire of commodity fetishism which underlines that the real owners of the means of production are the workers themselves.

"When I whip a woman wearing bondage gear in the video, it's a metaphor".

<http://www.thedailymash.co.uk/news/arts-entertainment/80353-2013101480353>

[Back to top](#)

Socialism or Barbarism?

In May 1939, just months before the outbreak of the Second World War, the historian Arnold Toynbee, sometime intellectual doyen of the Labour Party, gave the annual Hobhouse lecture at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). The lecture was called "*The Downfall of Civilization*". All the evidence, he said, suggested that modern capitalism would "*break down and disintegrate and finally dissolve*". What would be left, he suggested, would be anarchy and barbarism (THE MORBIS AGE: BRITAIN BETWEEN THE WARS, Richard Ovary 2009).

The belief in the collapse of capitalism or civilization into a new barbarism is not new. Similar sentiments to the ones expressed by Toynbee were to be found in the latter decades of the 19th century.

Although the use of the word barbarism has its origins in ancient Greece where it meant someone of "foreign-tongue", its modern relevance is the discussion of barbarism which first appeared in the writings on Lewis Morgan and Frederick Engels.

The use of the word "*barbarism*" as a stage in human social development by Morgan and Engels never had a moral or a negative connotation. Morgan described barbarism in neutral terms in his book ANCIENT SOCIETY (1877). Morgan identified three stages of human social evolution;

- * lower barbarism associated with the manufacture of pottery;
- * middle barbarism with domestication of animals in the Eastern hemisphere, irrigation and the use of adobe-brick and stone in architecture in the Western hemisphere;
- * upper barbarism with the manufacture of iron and the invention of the phonetic alphabet

In THE ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE STATE (1884), Engels called barbarism:

...a stage (where)... (T)he characteristic feature of the period of barbarism is the domestication and breeding of animals and the cultivation of plants... (p. 89).

The use of "*barbarism*" as a contrast to "*civilization*" is found in THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO in a section of the pamphlet where Marx and Engels discuss economic crises:

In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that in all earlier epochs would have seemed an absurdity –the epidemic

of over-production. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation has cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilisation, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce (COMMUNIST MANIFESTO page 18).

And

...and how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by the enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces, on the other by the conquest of new markets and by the more through exploitation of old ones (pages 18 & 19 of THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO).

Here the expression “*momentary barbarism*” is being used by Marx and Engels as an analogy not an actual state of social affairs. The word barbarism is being used to describe the consequence of an economic crisis which “*appears*” as if there has been universal devastation. In fact what is happening during an economic crisis is that the capitalist social relations of production have momentarily reined in the forces of production causing bankruptcy, unemployment and social hardship; a temporary resolution of a contradiction wholly associated with capitalism. Economic crises and trade depressions (they are not the same), as Marx was to later show, were part of a trade cycle; they were transient not permanent features of the profit system.

Engels also used the term “*barbarism*” in the context of a future European War. Here, there is a direct comparison between barbarism and war based upon historical precedence. Engels thought a major war would break-out in the near-future, leading either to socialism or barbarism. In this context “*barbarism*” was for Engels a “*universal bankruptcy*” equivalent to the social anarchy found during and after the Thirty Years War.

The Thirty Years War (1616 to 1648) was a catastrophic event in European history; the mortality rate was perhaps about 15 to 20 percent of the population with countless deaths due to armed conflict, famine and disease. Much of the devastation of civilian lives and property was caused by the destructive action of mercenary soldiers.

The war led to a serious dislocation to both the economy and the population of central Europe with many of the countries involved becoming bankrupt and was one of the principal factors to why capitalism was able to be established first in Britain rather than in mainland Europe.

Here is Engels writing about Prussia-Germany at the end of 1887:

‘ ..., finally, the only war left for Prussia-Germany to wage will be a world war, a world war, moreover, of an extent and violence hitherto unimagined. Eight to ten million soldiers will be at each other's throats and in the process they will strip Europe barer than a swarm of locusts.

Engels continued:

The depredations of the Thirty Years' War compressed into three to four years and extended over the entire continent; famine, disease, the universal lapse into barbarism, both of the armies and the people, in the wake of acute misery; irretrievable dislocation of our artificial system of trade, industry and credit, ending in universal bankruptcy; collapse of the old states and their conventional political wisdom to the point where crowns will roll into the gutters by the dozen and no one will be around to pick them up; the absolute impossibility of foreseeing how it will all end and who will emerge as victor from the battle.

And he concluded:

Only one consequence is absolutely certain: universal exhaustion and the creation of the conditions for the ultimate victory of the working class. That is the prospect for the moment when the systematic development of mutual one-upmanship in armaments reaches its climax and finally brings forth its inevitable fruits (F Engels, 'Introduction' to Sigismund Borkheim's pamphlet, IN MEMORY OF THE GERMAN BLOOD-AND-THUNDER PATRIOTS 1806-1807, in K Marx and F Engels, op cit, vol. XXVI, p. 451).

However, despite the millions dead, a subsequent flu epidemic and the destruction of vast amounts of capital (some \$186.3 billion), there was no “*universal exhaustion*” and there were no “*new conditions*” to speed on the working class to establish socialism. The victor of the First World War was not the working class. capitalism remained intact.

There was, though, one unanticipated event unforeseen by Engel, one that was to cast a dark shadow over the 20th century. And that was the 1917 coup d’état in Russia by a Bolshevik minority whose ideas and beliefs were to be exported to the rest of Europe with negative consequences for the growth of socialism. If the First World War did not set the basis for socialism; the dictatorship imposed by the Bolsheviks certainly stemmed the growth of socialism to a trickle once the Berlin Wall collapsed in 1989 and the Soviet Union imploded.

As the First World War engulfed Europe, Engels’ remarks had a profound effect on Rosa Luxemburg, one of the few socialists along with the Socialist Party of Great Britain, who opposed the First World War on grounds of class and class interest.

Luxemburg wrote:

Friedrich Engels once said: "Capitalist society faces a dilemma, either an advance to Socialism or a reversion to barbarism"... We have read and repeated these words thoughtlessly, without a conception of their terrible import. At this moment [1915] one glance about us will show us what a reversion to barbarism in capitalist society means...we stand today, as Friedrich Engels prophesied more than a generation ago, before the awful proposition.' R. Luxemburg, THE CRISIS IN THE GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY (New York, 1919, p18).

And in the JUNIUS PAMPHLET she continued this train of reasoning:

Friedrich Engels once said: "Bourgeois society stands at the crossroads, either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism." What does "regression into barbarism" mean to our lofty European civilization? Until now, we have all probably read and repeated these words thoughtlessly, without suspecting their fearsome seriousness. A look around us at this moment shows what the regression of bourgeois society into barbarism means. This world war is a regression into barbarism. The triumph of imperialism leads to the annihilation of civilization.

And she concluded:

At first, this happens sporadically for the duration of a modern war, but then when the period of unlimited wars begins it progresses toward its inevitable consequences. Today, we face the choice exactly as Friedrich Engels foresaw it a generation ago: either the triumph of imperialism or the collapse of all civilization as in ancient Rome, depopulation, desolation, degeneration--a great cemetery. Or the victory of socialism, that means the conscious active struggle of the international proletariat against imperialism and its method of war. This is a dilemma of world history, an either/or; the scales are wavering before the decision of the class-conscious proletariat.

In December 1918, a month before she was murdered following the defeat of the Spartacist uprising – an example of the futility of direct action-, Luxemburg wrote an article entitled “*What Do the Spartacists Want?*” She declared that a choice presented itself: “*Socialism or barbarism.*” If the latter—the continuation of capitalist relations—persisted, history would entail new wars, famine, and disease.

The dominant classes throughout history, she wrote:

all shed streams of blood, they all marched over corpses, murder, and arson, instigated civil war and treason, in order to defend their privileges and their power

She believed that as capitalism developed it would become more and more brutal and more and more destructive, threatening to turn much of the world “*into a smoking heap of rubble.*”

“*Socialism,*” Luxemburg concluded:

...has become necessary not merely because the proletariat is no longer willing to live under conditions imposed by

the capitalist class but, rather, because if the proletariat fails to fulfill its class duties, if it fails to realize socialism, we shall crash down together in a common doom" (THE ROSA LUXEMBURG READER, pp. 349–52, 364)

The fate of capitalism that “*barbarism*” represented for Luxemburg was Marx’s “*common ruin of the contending classes.*” (THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO)

What of Marx’s contention that capitalism may not give way to socialism but collapse into some form of dystopia? Will capitalism collapse into a permanent mediocrity of social existence like the post-apocalyptic films following a nuclear war or environmental catastrophe such as THE TIME MACHINE, WHEN THE WIND BLOWS, MAD MAX, THE BED SITTING ROOM AND CHILDREN OF MEN?

Nothing more is said in Marx’s subsequent writings about “*the common ruin of the contending classes*” most likely because both he and Engels did not consider it a likely outcome of the class struggle under capitalism. They were confident that the working class, despite many ups and downs, disappointments and set-backs, would eventually act in their class interests and politically establish socialism. After all, capitalism would never be run in the workers’ interest.

Of course, capitalism is highly destructive, violent and unpleasant; it is a social system of brutal behaviour and terrorism. The philosopher Jonathan Glover recently remarked that: “*War killed on average of over a hundred people an hour throughout the 20th century,*” (HUMANITY: A MORAL HISTORY OF THE 20TH CENTURY, 2006). The 21st century looks at being just as bleak.

In his book ON HISTORY (*Barbarism: A User’s Guide* p 338-339, 1997) the historian and Stalin apologist, the late Professor Eric Hobsbawm, noted that acts of barbarism had been on the increase throughout the 20th century.

Hobsbawm believed the First World War began the decent into “barbarism” but he had clearly not studied in detail the destruction associated with the American Civil War – where much of the basis of technological slaughter for the 1914-1918 war as well as trench warfare was anticipated. Nor did he consider the Boar War which heralded both “*scorch earth*” policies and the use of concentration camps to ensnare whole civilian populations.

Hobsbawm goes on to describe three other movements towards complete barbarism which followed the 1914 war; the period of world crisis from the social breakdown of 1917-20 to that of 1944-7, the four decades of the Cold War and lastly the breakdown of “*civilization*” over large parts of the world; a moral degeneracy if you like. And then he lectured that socialism was now impossible!

However, commodity production and exchange for profit has not been so severely damaged by war and periodic trade crises that it has posed a threat to the ownership of the means of production by the capitalist class. There has not been a reversal to a previous social system of barbarism as Engels and Luxemburg once believed; all that has happened is that capitalism has become more destructive and unpleasant. Capitalism shows no tendency towards the common ruin of the contending classes as it does to collapse into “*a moral degeneracy*”, whatever that means.

We are not on the edge of a “*smoking heap of rubble*” although the wholesale destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are two very real examples of potential world-wide immolation. True, capitalism has the potential to use nuclear weapons in a future war but the likelihood is that it will just move from one economic crisis to the next while environmentally despoiling the planet in the process.

Capitalism has the apparent capacity to survive great destruction of the means of production. It can survive the death in war of the working class from whom it gets its profit. In the space of 7 years, from 1939 to 1945 capitalism caused the death of some 50 million persons and still survived as an exploitive social system to this day.

There has been no return to previous social systems like those found after the fall of Rome. Japan and Germany, albeit with foreign aid, rebuilt their economies to become powerful capitalist countries. For the working class the real question is “*either capitalism or socialism*” and while workers support capitalism, the profit system with all its social misery will continue to afflict one generation of workers after another. Much of what Luxemburg wrote on capitalism and barbarism came out of a dark pessimism which she experienced at the outbreak of the 1914 war; the

social democratic leadership sided with their respective nations, the supposedly “*socialist*” membership was shown to be baseless while the trade unions and working class generally supported and took part in the war.

In Britain only the Socialist Party of Great Britain took a principled stand against the war on the basis of working class interest. The SPGB declared its opposition to the war on the grounds that it was purely a capitalist conflict and of no concern to workers no matter where they lived. Immediately war broke out the Executive Committee passed a resolution declaring that anyone who supported the war was unfit for membership.

One of the political characteristics of the Socialist Party of Great Britain is its measured and sober analysis of capitalism. Romantic or over-excited propaganda has not been a feature of the SPGB’s case against capitalism. Yes, we condemn capitalism in the way it reforms, exploits and destroys the working class and despoils the environment but we do not believe the working class can be scared into becoming socialists any more than they can be forced into becoming socialists and having socialism imposed upon them by an “*enlightened leadership*”. Socialists use facts and reason, working within the framework of the OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES which sets out the socialist case against capitalism. The use of fear and hyperbole is just poor propaganda

The working class, nevertheless, is increasingly being compelled by the economic laws acting on commodity production and exchanges for profit to finally face with sober senses its real conditions and consequences of life under capitalism. Dissent, criticism, protest and questioning have not been eradicated even though there is almost complete political control over conduits of communication in education and the media nor has it stopped workers engaging with socialist ideas. A realistic assessment of the workers’ class interests have to be thought through and translated into socialist political action.

Marx and Engels set this train of political engagement in motion with the publication of The COMMUNIST MANIFESTO in 1848 on to the three volumes of CAPITAL published from the 1860’s to the 1890’s. That is, they set out a scientifically rigorous case for the working class to establish socialism based upon the materialist conception of history, the labour theory of value and the political concept of the class struggle.

Socialists, struggling under equally difficult conditions today, are still continuing this important revolutionary work to bring the tragedy of the “*pre-history*” of human society to a revolutionary conclusion.

(This is part of a lecture, “*A World Gone Mad*” given at the Summer School at Marchmont Street in June 2014).

[Back to top](#)

What They Said About the First World War

Some Labour Leaders and the War

In an article by Mr Keir Hardie in yesterday’s Pioneer (Merthyr) he says:

I have never said or written anything to dissuade our young men from enlisting. I know too well all there is at stake (MANCHESTER GUARDIAN, November 28th, 1914.)

I returned about 1.30 and received the Rt. Hon. J. H. Thomas at lunch, a Labour M.P., and head of the Railwaymen’s Union. I found him a broad-minded patriot. Most anxious to help and fully alive to what the gentry of England have done in the war. He is a great admirer of Asquith...

(The Diary of Sir Douglas Haig, Commander of the British forces in France, October 31st, 1917)

Ruthlessness

Nothing for which the masses of our people have ever striven is more important than they and all of us should win in

this tremendous war against the ruthless military caste...that menaces the rights and freedom of mankind (H.M. Hyndman, writing in the DAILY DISPATCH, July 7th, 1915)

Sir Douglas Haig's diary for the same day shows that ruthlessness was not confined to one side...

At 11 o'clock Lt. Col. Fowkes, R.E., called on me from G.H.Q. regarding the use of asphyxiating gas. I said better wait until we can use it on a large scale, because the element of surprise is always greater on the first occasion.

The First Casualty

It is difficult to imagine what could be more despicable than the attitude of the capitalist Press during the past year. The persistent and ever more complete suppression of truth, the distortion of facts, the hypocrisy, the false and maudlin sentiment and stupid advice to the workers, the idiotic praise of everything British and the belittling of the same thing when done by the alien, all make it increasingly obvious that the "glorious institution", the capitalist Press, is one great insult to the intelligence of the people, (The SOCIALIST STANDARD, September, 1915)

It would be an admirable thing if all unmarried men between 18 and 30 without the manhood to offer themselves, were forcibly pressed into the Army and put into battalions where the kicks should be more than ha'pence (THE DAILY EXPRESS, August 20th, 1914.)

God's Purpose and War

It is God's leading that we are following now. War is an instrument through which Go It is God's leading that we are following now. War is an instrument through which God is working out his own purpose (Canon Alexander of St. Paul's (quoted in THE SOCIALIST STANDARD, August 25th, 1914)

And this is what the war really meant...

...some have gone in the dug-outs to try to get a few hours' sleep, but this is almost impossible, for the earth shakes from the vibrations of the artillery. The lice crawl all over the body, driving one near frantic, and the rats are in swarms and run over us. But there are some corpses lying out on the top, with plenty of rats around them, so they won't go hungry. (A SOLDIER IN THE TRENCHES, The Ploughshare, March 1917.)

The War for "Freedom"

The Daily Mail wants the names of every known pacifist or active friend of Germany in your city, town or village... the names of every speaker or writer who favours Germany, with all you know about the source of his income, the societies to which he belongs, and the relations he has, or had, with Germany (THE DAILY MAIL, October 25th, 1917)

Talking about Homes...

It is a pitiful thing to think of, but thousands of these brave men of ours have better homes in the trenches of Flanders than in the sunless alleys of our Motherland (Arthur Mee, writing in LLOYD'S NEWS, March 26th, 1916.)

Sir David Keppel (Master of the King's Household) arrived and went round to inspect several Chateaux considered suitable for the King's occupation. He fixed one which (for secrecy) is to be prepared for me. Derek is enjoying himself so much that he has asked to stay another day (THE DIARY OF SIR DOUGLAS HAIG, Commander of the British Forces in France, August 2nd, 1916).

Marching on Whose Stomach?

We then went to Poperinghe. It was now past 2 o'clock, so we stopped to have lunch near some stacks on the road south of Steenwoorde. A party of refugees passed us and a well-dressed woman and a man came up and asked if they could go by Tournai to Brussels... They had walked all the way from Ostend with a basket on the arm or a pack of clothes on their backs. All that was left to the poor things of their property... I gave them 2 doz. "Oxo" soup squares for which they seemed most grateful. (THE DIARY OF SIR DOUGLAS HAIG, Commander of the British Forces in France, October 17th, 1914)

Prince Arthur of Connaught arrived with the Crown Prince of Servia... Lunch lasted two hours and all enjoyed themselves hugely. (July 7th, 1915). We had coffee after lunch in my writing room, and Joffre enjoyed himself so much that it was 2.20 p.m. before he went... They are, indeed difficult allies to deal with! But there is no doubt that the nearest way to the hearts of many of them, including that of the "Generalissimo", is down their throats and some 1840 brandy had a surprisingly smooth effect upon him and Castlenau! (May 26th, 1916.)

A Prayer for the Troops

Keep the Officers who lead us; help us all to render them cheerful obedience. May we all endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. When suffering or death comes to us, may the Holy comforter be as a friend at our side. Grant us speedy Victory over our enemies, if it be Thy Will. God save the King, the Queen, and all the Royal Family. Give wisdom and courage to all who control the affairs of our Empire. Bless all our Allies, and save them and us with Thy Great Salvation; through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen

All extracts taken from THE SOCIALIST STANDARD August 1964 p. 122, 126 and 127

[Back to top](#)

“Tomorrow, There's No School In Gaza...”

The Gaza strip is a concentration camp with concrete and steel walls bordering Egypt and posts, sensors and buffer zones on lands adjacent to Israel. And now Gaza is made up of a fast decreasing population currently being displaced, injured and killed by the Israeli military in an attempt to impose discipline and control over a disputed border. The Gaza strip has become a killing ground for Israeli tanks, artillery and mortar rounds; a site for indiscriminate navel bombardments and rocket attacks from overhead jet planes where the death of Palestinian children and screams of bereaved mothers is met with the cruel chant of Israeli fundamentalists: “*Tomorrow, There's no school in Gaza, There are no children left*” (CHANNEL 4 NEWS 30 June 2014).

Not that Socialists have any time for the, albeit democratically elected, terrorist organisation known as Hamas. Rockets, some allegedly stored in schools and Mosques, fired at civilians in Israel are acts of terrorism no different in intent and violent consequence than those shells and missiles fired by the Israeli military into homes, schools and hospitals; so too is the use by Hamas in the past of car bombs and suicide bombers to kill and maim as many people as possible in crowded civilian areas of Israel. Nationalist struggle are nasty and unpleasant.

Democracy is a double-edged sword and can be used for freedom from capitalism, nationalism and racism, or, as in the case of those living on a wage and salary in Gaza; it can be used to cut their own throats. Socialists offer Hamas neither support nor encouragement in their struggle to establish a Palestinian state. We oppose all nationalist groups, whether Zionists or Palestinians, as harmful to the interest of the working class. The working class has no country to die and kill for. The objective of the working class should be consciously and politically to establish Socialism.

Hamas has been branded a terrorist organisation by the US and the EU but not Israel whose state terrorism remains largely unquestioned even though it has led to the killing of over 1,700 men, women and children up to the beginning of August 2014 as opposed to 67 Israeli deaths of whom three were civilians (BBC NEWS 3rd August 2014). Israel with its sophisticated weapons imported from the US and Britain act with impunity. Little is said and done about the blockade which has turned the Gaza strip into a ghetto of poverty and human degradation.

As a client state of the US, Israel can do what it wants, when and how. Even when the Israeli missiles and grenades have been exhausted by the continuous onslaught of death and destruction, the US government allows the Israeli government to buy more weaponry from its US suppliers. Israel serves the interests of the US in the Middle East by virtue of being a land-based air-craft carrier useful to protect US oil interests in the region and has to be supported at all costs even though the images of dead and dying children might turn President Obama's stomach.

What of Hamas? Hamas wants a Palestinian state based on the borders of 1967. In this aim they are supported by liberals and the capitalist left notably the array of disreputable Trotskyist organisations like the Socialist Workers Party. The SWP are nationalists by proxy, supporters of a Palestinian State, not because they have any interest in Palestinians per se but because the conflict is part of a wider "*Imperialist*" struggle against the US and its client state, Israel. The SWP subscribe to the doctrine of "*the enemy of my enemy is my friend*" even though this means giving support to religious obscurantism, dictatorship, prison camps, genocide, torture, terrorism and violence.

The conflict in Gaza has predictably led to racist attacks elsewhere in the world. Socialists are saddened by and condemn the racism which flows from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Anti-Semitism by pro-Palestinian supporters and hatred from some pro-Israeli groups who view Arabs as untermenschen and celebrate the death of Palestinian children, do not develop Socialist awareness and the necessary political action to replace capitalism with socialism. Racism only serves the interest of a ruling class. A divided working class cannot establish socialism.

So, to re-use a well-known Shakespearean phrase, we say to the Israeli and Palestinian ruling class and their allies: "*A plague on both your houses*". Socialists do not take sides in the disputes between factions of the capitalist class and their politicians and neither should the working class.

Hamas represents the interests of a would-be Palestinian ruling class. Only a minority of Palestinians would ever benefit from the marine gas fields containing 1.4 trillion cubic feet of gas which exists off the coast adjacent to the Gaza strip or from the deposits of oil located elsewhere in the region - while the majority of the population will be living in the same poverty as they do now; forced to sell their ability to work for a wage and salary and exploited in the process of commodity production and exchange for profit.

The Palestinian state will be a capitalist state in international competition with other capitalist states and required to play its own role in global politics. Israel and other Arab states will be seen as rivals for raw resources, mineral, trade routes and spheres of political influence so there will be no enduring peace even if a Palestinian state were to be established. We only have to look at Iraq and Syria to see what capitalist future will bring the Palestinians.

Just as socialists opposed the North Vietnamese nationalist struggle against the US during the 1960's, the Cuban revolution between 1953 and 1959 which did not result in the establishment of socialism, the various nationalist movements in Africa, including the ANC as well as the so-called "*democratic movements*" in Eastern Europe which replaced one form of capitalism with another, so socialists oppose Hamas as a nationalist movement that puts forward capitalist not socialist solutions in a world of national conflict and war. Neither Israeli nor Palestinian capitalism can serve the interest of the vast majority of the population. The workings of world capitalism in the Middle East, as it does elsewhere on this planet, shows that peace and prosperity in the region are only possible within a world-wide socialist framework provided by the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

From 2000-2009, the United States licensed, paid for, and delivered to Israel more than 670 million weapons and related equipment, valued at nearly \$19 billion, through three main weapons transfer programs (Foreign Military Sales, Direct Commercial Sales, and Excess Defense Articles). These weapons transfer programs accounted for nearly 80 percent of the more than \$24 billion in military aid appropriated to Israel during these years. The bulk of the remaining money was spent by Israel on its own domestic arms industry, a unique exemption written into law for Israel. All other countries receiving U.S. military aid are required to spend the whole sum within the United States. Military aid to Israel ran the gamut from the patently absurd—one used food steamer valued at \$2,100—to the lethal—93 F-16D fighter jets valued at a total of nearly \$2.5 billion. With nearly 500 categories of weapons transferred to Israel, the United States is pervasively, intricately, and comprehensively involved in arming its military (COUNTERPUNCH August 1-3, 2014)

Object and Declaration of Principles

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

